

North Branch of the Chicago River Watershed Workgroup

April 27, 2017

Name

Title

Organization

Address 1

Address 2



Dear Name

You are receiving this invitation to join the newly forming North Branch Chicago River Watershed Workgroup (NBWW) because all or part of your community or jurisdiction is located in the North Branch Chicago River (North Branch) watershed. Stormwater from your community drains to the North Branch, and treated sanitary sewage effluent from businesses and residents in your jurisdiction is also discharged to the river.

The North Branch watershed includes 3 tributary streams: the East (Skokie River), Middle and West Forks that collectively make up the North Branch Chicago River. The watershed for the North Branch spans Lake and Cook Counties (a watershed map and frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet are attached). All three tributaries and the mainstem of the North Branch are identified by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) as having impaired water quality. Phosphorus, fecal coliform, chloride and 18 additional pollutants are identified as causing the impairment. As a result, the North Branch and its three tributaries do not meet Illinois EPA's designated uses for aquatic life and primary contact recreation.

River pollution is caused by both "point sources" (direct stormwater/wastewater effluent discharges to the North Branch through pipes); and "nonpoint sources" (pollutants from yards, driveways, roads, and parking lots that are picked up by stormwater runoff that flows to the river). Illinois EPA has been working with agencies and communities that have National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits to reduce pollutant loads to the river. In addition, Illinois EPA is in the process of completing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study for the North Branch in 2017. The TMDL is similar to a required "pollution diet" and will include pollutant waste load allocations for NPDES permittees. Wastewater treatment NPDES permittees are being asked to add costly nutrient removal systems to their operations, and municipal separate storm sewer system permittees (MS4s) communities also have permit requirements to address TMDL pollutants in stormwater discharges.

Illinois EPA's goal is to improve water quality so the North Branch can be removed from the state's impaired waters list. To improve water quality most cost efficiently and effectively, Illinois EPA is encouraging watershed communities to form a "workgroup" to address the pollution issues. The workgroup model is being successfully implemented in other watersheds in the region as an alternative to the Illinois EPA imposing costly upgrades to publicly owned treatment works' (POTWs) and more stringent permit limits to communities' NPDES stormwater permits. In response, POTWs and communities within the North Branch watershed have begun efforts to form a workgroup. The NBWW is a voluntary, dues paying, membership organization that will monitor water quality to better identify and address the sources of pollution; and to strategize to improve water quality based on scientific data and local decision making. Membership would consist of POTWs, MS4s, other watershed agencies, environmental groups, consultants, and concerned citizens. It is expected that the NBWW would meet quarterly and be governed by a set of bylaws and an elected executive board. The workgroup will provide many benefits including:

- ◆ Workgroup monitoring data can be used by members for NPDES permit compliance for POTWs and MS4s
- ◆ Local decision making for cost-effective improvements - allowing for cost savings for everyone
- ◆ Education and outreach to identify the best new and improved pollutant reduction practices and technologies
- ◆ Continuing education credits to maintain professional certifications
- ◆ **Water quality improvements in the river and tributaries**

We need your participation and support to form the NBWW and make it equitable for all who are located in and impact the watershed. Annual dues are needed to sustain the work effort. A proposed membership dues structure has been calculated with a standard fixed component; plus an added dues increment based on design average flow for POTWs and total drainage area within the watershed for MS4 communities.

Annual dues will be used to implement a comprehensive, watershed wide monitoring program that will be the basis for identifying more specific pollution sources and water quality improvements, and will cover technical and administrative support. Membership funds may also be used as grant match for the 10-year update of the North Branch watershed plan, which is intended to provide action recommendations within the watershed to address water quality improvement as the group moves forward with projects and programs to improve the river.

We've enclosed a North Branch FAQ sheet, budget, proposed dues structure, watershed map, and template for a letter of support. Please use this information to do the following:

- Review the North Branch FAQ sheet and watershed map
- Review the NBWW budget and dues structure
- Review the dues amount for your agency/community and forward any questions to the NBWW committee. Dues payment to the NBWW will begin in May 1, 2018.
- Please provide a letter of support (similar to the template attached) from your community by **July 1, 2017** to join the NBWW. (Available via Word document, contact Ashley Warren, awarren@lakecountyil.gov)

The NBWW and the proposed dues structure will be presented and discussed at the May 10, 2017 North Branch Planning Committee meeting. The meeting is from 1:00p.m. – 3:00p.m. at Patty Turner Center (Deerfield Park District), 375 Elm St., Deerfield, IL 60015. You will receive an email notification for the meeting. We are also available to discuss the workgroup and your membership in further detail on an individual basis, and are available to present the NBWW to your community or agency leadership if desired. *Please contact Joe Robinson, jorobinson@northshorewrd.org for more information.*

Sincerely,



Brandon J. Janes, PE
Water Reclamation Facility Superintendent
Village of Deerfield



Brian Dorn, PE
Executive Director
North Shore Water Reclamation District

North Branch Watershed Workgroup Formation Committee

- Village of Deerfield
- North Shore Water Reclamation District (NSWRD)
- Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC)
- East Skokie Drainage District (ESDD)